

HEALTH INFORMATION BOOKLET

BEIRUT – LEBANON

January 2009

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Welcome to Lebanon that was always referred to as the “Switzerland of the Middle East”.

Lebanon is renowned for its scenic beauty, although uncontrolled development and exploitation in many areas have adversely affected this beauty. Along the Mediterranean there is a narrow coastal strip, with cities, suburbs and some banana citrus and olive groves. A dramatic mountain chain rises to over 10,000 feet within 20 miles of the coast, with impressive terracing and cultivation. Although pine forests abound, the famed Cedars of Lebanon now exist only in a few small groves preserved in the north and central regions. Distances are short in Lebanon, and travel from the seashore to mountain areas can be done easily in an hour by car. The climate can best be compared to that of southern California.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE HEALTH UNIT

MEDICAL UNIT

LOCATION: The Medical Unit is located in one of the Annex trailers

EMERGENCY: 555

TELEPHONE: 961-4-542 600 ext: 4302

HOURS: Monday through Friday 0800-1630
Saturday and Sunday closed

AFTER HOURS: Embassy Nurse Leila Aouad
Cell phone: 03-331 278
Home 01-202 046
Or contact Charlie Post who will contact the nurse. 04-544 260

Post's Medical Unit is managed by Ms. Leila Aouad RN, a Foreign Service National.

1. The services of the Medical Unit are available to all official Americans
2. The nurse can be reached at the Medical Unit during regular office hours 0800-1630.
3. The nurse also has an Embassy supplied cellular telephone and can be reached at all times.

The RMO is stationed in Amman, Jordan. The RMO/P is stationed in Cairo, Egypt. Both visit the post regularly but can also be contacted at any time for consultation or emergency visit.

New Comers

All new comers should report to the health Unit for a medical briefing as soon as possible after arrival. They should bring their medical records, a copy of their medical clearances and their yellow shot record, in addition to filing out the registration forms.

CLEARANCE PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS.

Prior to travel to your onward assignment, a physical examination and specific tests are necessary to evaluate the current state of your health and the ability of you and your family members ability to reside with relative safety abroad. Based on your age and the proposed assignment, you may be asked to provide reports from your private doctors or undergo additional tests. A current, valid medical clearance is required for you and your family to be beneficiaries of the Department of State medical program overseas.

Options Available To Obtain A Medical Clearance:

1. Complete History and Physical Exam including required tests.
2. Medical Clearance Update: Full PE not required. May be used for both Class1 and Class 2 clearances. Any lab tests may be requested to make a clearance determination for any age.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE MEDICAL PROGRAM

Explanation of Benefits.

You and your family members should be familiar with the Office Of Medical Services and what the medical program provides during your Foreign Service career. The Department's occupational health program provides a preventive health care program and assists you in obtaining medical care at your post of assignment. Health care providers in health units or administrative officers of diplomatic missions will oversee health care issues, assist you in your selection of a physician or medical facility, and help you interpret the regulations (FAMs) on which this fact sheet is based. The medical program is not a health maintenance organization which provides unlimited care for everyone in the Foreign Service who is assigned abroad. Its medical staff serves as a liaison between you and your physician. The Department wishes to assist you in staying healthy during your forthcoming overseas tour through our emphasis on patient education. Some of the services included in the medical program are the following:

HEALTH UNIT PARTICIPANTS

The Health Unit is open to official US Government employees and their dependants who are participants in the Department of State Medical Program. Health care personnel cannot provide services to unofficial patients unless written authorization has been received from the Chief of Mission. For those granted emergency access, authorization must be provided each time the patient is seen. The USG requires reimbursement for providing health unit services to patient not covered by the Department of State's medical program

MEDICAL EVACUATION

Medevacs, dentevacs, psychevacs,

There are times that the Health Unit and the local medical resources may not be adequate for either diagnosing or treating your medical problem. In these situations, we will advise that you receive specialized care outside Lebanon. If the problem is not an urgent one, and there is not risk in putting off either further testing or treatment, recommended consultations may be deferred until your next official trip away from post. However, if the Regional Medical Officer advises so, a medical evacuation will be arranged, for the most part London is the official evacuation point for Lebanon. Medical evacuations to the US would be unusual, and unless recommended by the RMO and approved by MED in Washington, would be on a cost-construct basis.

In the event of a medical evacuation, travel expenses will be paid for you and per diem will be authorized. Certain situations may require you to travel with either a medical or non-medical attendant, at times a family member. In these situations, travel expenses are covered for the attendant but per diem is limited to 3 days except in extraordinary circumstances.

EMERGENCY VISITATION TRAVEL

Emergency visitation travel by a member of the Foreign Service stationed abroad is authorized only in instances of serious illness, injury, or death of a member of the Foreign Service member's immediate family.

A Foreign Service member is limited to one round trip for each serious illness or injury of each immediate family member.

In cases involving children, where both parents are employees of a foreign affairs agency, both parents shall be authorized emergency visitation travel, regardless of which parent lists the child as a dependent in the residence and dependency report.

A recommendation to authorize emergency travel should be requested from the Medical Director (M/MED) of the Department of State. The Administrative Officer should be informed immediately so that she/he can prepare the necessary message for M/MED.

M/MED will make appropriate inquiries to determine the seriousness of an illness. If the recommendations to authorize travel are not received quickly enough, the member may travel at post expense but is required to sign a repayment agreement.

Emergency visitation travel in case of the death of an immediate family member may be approved by the Administrative Officer without M/MED recommendation.

Time away from post on emergency visitation is charged to annual leave, sick leave, compensatory time off, or leave without pay, as appropriate. Time in travel status to and from the place of emergency shall be counted as administrative leave. Administrative leave will be calculated up to a maximum amount of time which equates to the most direct and usually traveled route from post of assignment to the place of emergency and return.

Travel from post to the location in US of the seriously ill, injured, or deceased immediate family member will be by the most direct, usually traveled, and inexpensive route. Indirect travel may be performed only when necessitated by

official duties to be performed en-route. Travel normally must be less than first class commercial air service. Special fares such as excursion fares and round trip fares are to be used to the maximum extent possible.

Transportation expenses such as mandatory airport taxes and transportation between airports are authorized. Other expenses such as transportation to and from the airport, per diem, and excess baggage or unaccompanied baggage charges are not authorized.

Time spent in the United States delays date of home leave eligibility only if the member has not accumulated 18 months of continuous service abroad.

If a member eligible for family visitation travel travels on emergency visitation to the place where the member normally travels on family visitation, there must be a waiting period of at least three months following return to post before departing on family visitation travel. An exception to the waiting requirement may be made for valid reasons, if post workload and scheduling considerations permit.

Who Pays

No charges for health room services

WHO PAYS? While overseas and under the Department of State's medical program here are the **FINANCIAL FACTS** in capsule form. **YOU PAY** for doctor and specialty outpatient visits overseas (including laboratory tests, x-rays, inoculations, etc.). You should submit claims to your insurance carrier and receive an allowable reimbursement for claims once your deductible is met. Our overseas health program is not a "free" medical program. However, **MED PAYS** usual and customary expenses for hospitalization and related outpatient care for illnesses, injuries or conditions incurred overseas. We serve as the secondary payer, and our liability is limited to the residual after the employee's own health insurance has paid. Like most insurance carriers, we do not cover plastic surgery, day surgery, or experimental or investigative treatments. No deductible is required when hospitalization is indicated overseas.

What will be covered for medical evacuation? **MED WILL PAY FOR TRAVEL AND PER DIEM** to the designated medical evacuation site. Travelers may chose to go to an alternate destination of their choice; however, they must pay any difference in transportation fees. This is known as "cost constructive" travel. **YOU WILL PAY ALL OUTPATIENT EXPENSES** when you are medically evacuated. If hospitalized, **MED WILL PAY** usual and customary charges after your health insurance covers its portion.

Form FS 569 issued when hospitalization is authorized. Outpatient care related to the same problem is also covered and treated the same as a longer stay in a

hospital. It is the mandatory responsibility of the employee to seek reimbursement from his/her insurance company.

MED WILL PAY or provide for malaria suppressants, mandatory immunizations, fluoride supplementation for children, and tuberculosis prophylactic drugs, when recommended if you are residing abroad. **YOU WILL PAY** for routine medications prescribed by a physician (blood pressure medications, birth control pills, and other prescription drugs); **YOU WILL PAY** for sundries and non-prescription drugs.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

Lebanon has numerous reputable physicians and some well-equipped facilities.

Physicians: Following is a list of names of reputable physicians, dentists and veterinarian sorted by specialty.

A.U.H.= American University Hospital.

Name	Address	Tel No.	English
Cardiology			
Dr. Rachid Sarkis	Abou-Jaoudeh Hospital	03-680025	Fluent
Dr. Abdallah Rebeiz	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Nassif Feghaly	Sacre-Coeur Hospital	03-749020	Fluent
Dentistry			
Dr. Elie El-Achkar	Rabeih-Mtayleb	03-754939	Fluent
Dr. Mounir Doumit	Dbayeh, Near Embassy	03-302211	Good
Dr. Alain Romanos	Antelias	03- 169169	Fluent
Dermatology			
Dr. Joyce Azar	Hazmieh M center	03-925435	Fluent
Dr. Abdel-Ghani, Kebbeh	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Rose Makhoul	Jounieh	03-241705	Fluent
E.N.T.			
Dr. Elie Boustany	Antelias Clinic	03-711797	Good
Dr. Nabil Fuliehan	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Bassam Romanos	Eye and Ear Hospital	03-359696	Fluent

Endocrinology			
Dr. Rita Chidiac	St. Georges Hospital	03-07505	Fluent
Dr.Sami Azar	A.U.H.	03-234250	Fluent
Gastro-Enterology			
Dr. Philippe, Sanior	St.Joseph Hospital	03-394654	Fluent
Makhoul Elias	Abu-Jawdy Hospital	03-711787	Good
Dr. Kassem Barada	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
General Surgery			
Dr. Antoine Hanna	Abou Jaoudeh Hospital	03-254574	Good
Dr. Georges Abi-Saad	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Ceryl Tohmeh	Hotel Dieu Hospital	03-704874	Fluent
Gynecology			
Dr. Bahige Arida	Rizk Hospital	03-704200	Fluent
Dr. Issam Alam	Abu-Jawdy Hospital	03-660305	Fluent
Dr. Johny Awwad	A.U.H.	01/350000	Fluent
Infection Disease			
Dr.Marwan Uweyda	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Roula Samaha	Rizk Hospital	03-924800	Fluent
Dr. Roy Nasnas	Hotel Dieu Hospital	01-615300	Fluent
Dr. Souheil Karaa	St. Joseph Hospital	01-248750	Fluent
Internal Medicine			
Dr. Camille Hannaoui	Naccache, Near Embassy	03-388031	Fluent
Dr. Jihad Helou	Levant Sin El-Fil	03-882515	Fluent
Dr. Georges Azzi,	Sacre-Coeur & St Joseph Hospitals	03/553321	Fluent
Neurology			
Dr.Samir Atweh	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr.Mounir Khoury	St.George Hospital	03/814411	Good
Dr.Naji Riachi	Rizk Hospital	01-333999	Fluent
Neuro-Surgery			
Dr. Ghassan Skaf	A.U.H.	03-746758	Fluent
Dr. Ibrahim, saikaly	Sacre Coeur Hospital	03-434350	Fluent
Ophtalmology			
Dr. Alexandre Shackal	Clinic Museum area	03-258583	Fluent
Dr.Amid Samaha	Eye and Ear Hospital	03-862228	Fluent
Dr. Alexandre Jalkh	Eye and Ear Hospital	01-521130	Fluent

Orthopedics			
Dr.Nadim Afeich	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Walid Hayek	Haroun Hospital	03-256 921	Fluent
Dr. Alfred Khoury	Rizk Hospital	03-272 588	Fluent
Dr. Chahine Assi	Rizk Hospital	03-551919	Fluent
Pneumology			
Dr.Ghassan Jamalleddine	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr.Koussa Marie-louise	Rizk Hospital	03-279030	Fluent
Dr. Nabil Khoury	St. Georges hospital	03-286586	Fluent
Urology			
Dr.Raja Khawli	A.U.H.	01-350000	Fluent
Dr. Salim Zayni	Rizk Hospital	03-622412	Fluent
Dr. Rizkallah Massabneh	Notre Dame Hospital Jounieh	09-931401	Fluent
Psychiatric			
Dr. Adel Akl	Rizk Hospital	01/333999	Good
Dr. Namir Damuligi	A.U.H.	01/325000	Fluent
Dr. Elie Karam	St.George Hospital	01/585700	Fluent
Dr.Dory Hachem	La Croix Hospital	03/707270	Fluent
Veterinarian			
Dr.Fawzi Nicolas	Jal-El-dib	03/305756	Good
Dr.Mansour Kassab	Achrafieh	03/323347	Good

Hospitals

All the following hospitals have special capabilities such as Emergency Rooms, Cardiac Care, Obstetrics and Pediatrics.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. Abou-Jaoudeh Hospital | Jal-El-Dib | Tel: 01-410400 |
| 2. Haroun Hospital | Zalka | Tel: 01-487243 |
| 3. Bhannes Hospital | Bhannes | Tel: 04-982700 |

The following also have facilities for open-heart surgery in addition to the full range of other facilities.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 5. A.U.H. | West Beirut | Tel: 01-350000 |
| 6. Rizk Hospital | Achrafieh | Tel: 01-200800 |
| 7. St. George Hospital | Achrafieh | Tel: 01-585700 |
| 8. Hotel Dieu Hospital | Achrafieh | Tel: 01-615300 |
| 9. Sacre Coeur Hospital | Hazmieh | Tel: 01-453500 |
| 10. St. Joseph Hospital | Dora | Tel: 01-248750 |

HOSPITALIZATION COVERAGE OVERSEAS

Should you require hospitalization, post will assist you in obtaining the best possible medical care. Post will provide an authorization for the medical facility guaranteeing payment for approved care. The Department functions as a "secondary payer" if you are hospitalized in Beirut. After post pays the bills, you must submit a claim to your insurance company within 60 days.

Laboratory

Laboratories in Lebanon are very well equipped and follow the US and European standards.

Radiology Services

Basic X-Ray studies, some contrast X-Rays (like barium studies) ultrasound, examinations, mammograms, CT, MRI scans or Nuclear Medicine studies, all can be done in Lebanon.

HEALTH UNIT PROGRAMS

Blood Types

Please register your blood type with the health Unit upon arrival at post. If you do not know your blood type the nurse will arrange for your blood type, to be checked at a local laboratory. The health Unit strongly recommends that no one receive blood products without the nurse first being notified.

There are Blood Banks in Lebanon where all types of blood are available and blood donors are closely monitored, screened well examined and tested.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Some immunizations are available in the Medical Unit. It is the responsibility of each person to keep his/her immunizations current at all times. The following vaccines are currently available in the Medical Unit:

Hepatitis A vaccine

Hepatitis B vaccine

Influenza yearly

Post can provide from the local pharmacy any immunization if needed.

FIRST AID

First aid kits are located in several different sections of the embassy. Post has five bunkers and in each Bunker there are medical equipment supplies.

Basic First Aid

Bleeding

Apply direct pressure (compress, bandage) and elevate.

Burn

Soak in cold water until no more pain. Cover with clean bandage. Do not apply any medication.

Sprain

Apply ice-bag wrapped in a cloth for 20-30 minutes

Fracture & Discoloration

Immobilize in position found, using pillows, books, etc...

FIRST AID KIT

A good first aid kit is an essential component of home security. Please keep one on hand in your home.

We suggest that your kit, at minimum, contain the following items :

1. Latex gloves
2. Band-Aids (a variety of sizes and styles)
3. Several sterile 2x2 and 4x4 gauze pads.
4. Several non-stick gauze pads.
5. Gauze roller bandages.
6. Adhesive tape.
7. Triangular bandage (good for making a sling)
8. Scissors.
9. Tweezers.
10. Safety pins.
11. Pocket knife
12. Thermometer
13. Pen light
14. Syrup of ipecac (to induce vomiting in suspected poisoning)
15. Soap
16. Hydrogen peroxide or other disinfectant
17. Topical medication
 - a. Sunscreen
 - b. Insect repellents
 - c. Neosporin, Bacitracin or other antibiotic ointment
 - d. Cortisone cream
 - e. Aloe vera cream (for minor burns)
18. Oral medications
 - a. Tylenol (acetaminophen)- tablets and children's liquid
 - b. Advil (ibuprofen)
 - c. Pepto Bismol
 - d. Benadryl (or other antihistamine)- for allergic reactions.

Fitness

Nearly every person at post can exercise, or what is most important is to find a form of exercise which one can enjoy and will be able to maintain. Physical inactivity has been shown to be one of the biggest risk factors for heart attacks, perhaps even a greater risk than smoking. Unless there is a medical reason not to exercise, you should pursue some form of physical activity a minimum of three days a week for twenty minutes at a time. Even moderate exercise has shown to have a benefit in reducing heart attack risk, so one should forget the dictum "no pain, no gain". Exercising can be fun!

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS & PRECAUTIONS

What you Drink

Many of the illnesses you can get from food can also get from the water you drink. These include diseases such as salmonella poisoning, giardiasis and hepatitis A. It is recommended that you do not drink water right from the tap. Tap water is considered unsafe to drink. Employee's use only bottled mineral water for personal consumption. **GSO provides free bottled water to residences and offices.**

Bottled Water

Bottled water is widely available and assumed to be safe for drinking. Always check to ensure that the bottle's seal is intact and clean off the top of the bottle before pouring or drinking.

Ice

When making ice cubes, use only potable treated water. Freezing does **NOT** make water safe, so ice cubes made with water from an unknown source should always be considered contaminated. Do not consume local ice cubes if possible.

Some other point to keep in mind about the water:

No need to rinse your dishes in distilled water. Just allow them to air dry.

Don't forget that ice in many restaurants is made from tap water. Freezing does not kill giardia.

Drinking tea or coffee at a restaurant or local dinner party is okay, assuming it's hot.

Food Preparation and Handling

Many diseases are transmitted through contaminated foods which may be contaminated both by disease-causing organisms and pesticides. Foods in Lebanon are exposed to a variety of pesticides and insects and are handled by numerous individuals unacquainted with ordinary hand washing hygiene. The following are guidelines for buying and preparing foodstuffs:

1. Wash and soak for 10 minutes in warm tap water to which 1 tablespoon of detergent soap has been added.
2. Scrub each piece with a brush.
3. Rinse off all soap with cold tap water.
4. Follow by soaking them in a chlorine solution for 15 minutes. (One tablespoon of liquid Clorox in gallon of water will provide the right properties).

5. After 15 minutes, rinse with potable water, let drip and store in the refrigerator.

Carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, fruits, etc, can be prepared with safety if the vegetables are cleaned using the above-mentioned process. Peeling is an added precaution. However, lettuce, parsley and celery are difficult to sterilize. Amoebic cysts are viable in the soil for over 20 years and are absorbed into the veins of these vegetables.

Washing and soaking in the Clorox solution will not kill the amoebic cysts. Don't forget to make sure all food you eat out is cooked. Try to avoid any/all sorts of salads when eating out, especially "tabouleh", which seems to cause the most problems for everyone. When all else fails consider the following; **'Cook it, boil it, or don't eat it'**.

Meats

All kind of meat should be well cooked.

Local Dairy Products

It is recommended that only pasteurized dairy products be used. These are considered safe and do not need be boiled. Sterilized milk is also considered safe and does not need to be boiled. Foreign ice cream is available in most supermarkets and is considered safe.

EGGS

Shell eggs should be refrigerated during storage. They should not be washed, since the water will penetrate the shell and contaminate the egg. Soak eggs in a chlorine solution, the same as for fruit and vegetables. Eggs should be cooked to a point where both the yolk and white have become firm.

Household Help

A general physical, chest x-ray, urinalysis and stool test should be done for cooks and all household help before you hire them. Tests should also be performed periodically. Immunizations against typhoid and tetanus are desirable, as is a tuberculosis skin test (PPD). Assistance regarding the examination is available from the Health Unit. Expenses for the examination will be borne by the employee.

Do not allow individuals with any suspected skin infection to handle foods or work in the kitchen. Be certain that your kitchen help is using boiling water and disinfecting produce properly. Check their routine and techniques carefully and often.

SEAT BELT POLICY

The Department of State Seat Belt policy requires the use of seat belts by all occupants of official vehicles or private vehicles used for official business. Embassy drivers are under instruction not to move the vehicle until all occupants are properly restrained.

SUN EXPOSURE

1. Minimize sun exposure during the hours 1100 AM to 2 PM, when the sun is strongest. Plan your outdoor activities for the early morning or late afternoon.
2. Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt and long pants when out in the sun. Choose tightly-woven materials for greater protection from the sun's rays.
3. Apply sunscreen before every exposure to the sun and reapply liberally and at least every 2 hours as long as you stay in the sun. The sunscreen should always be reapplied after swimming or perspiring heavily. Sunscreens with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or more is recommended.
4. Use a sunscreen during high altitude activities such as mountain climbing and skiing. At high altitudes, where there is less atmosphere to absorb the sun's rays, your risk of burning is greater.
5. Don't forget to use your sunscreen on overcast days. The sun's rays are damaging to your skin on cloudy and hazy days as they are on sunny days.
6. Individuals at high risk for skin cancer (outdoor workers, fair-skinned individuals, and persons who have already had skin cancer) should apply sunscreens daily.
7. Photosensitivity – an increased sensitivity to sun exposure – is a possible side effect of certain medications (including birth control pills) and cosmetics. If you're using any such products, you may need to take extra precautions.
8. If you develop an allergic reaction to your sunscreen, change sunscreens.
9. Beware of reflective surfaces. Sand, snow, concrete, and water can reflect more than half the sun's rays onto your skin. Sitting in the shade does not guarantee protection from sunburn.
10. Avoid tanning parlors. The UV light emitted by them causes sunburn and premature aging, and increases your risk of developing skin cancer.
11. Keep your infants out of the sun. Begin using sunscreens on children at six months of age, and then allow sun exposure with moderation. Teach children sun protection early. Sun damage occurs with each unprotected sun exposure and accumulates over the course of a lifetime.

Bee Sting

Push stinger out with scraping motion, using a fingernail. Do not use tweezers. Apply cold compress and keep affected area low. Watch out for allergic reactions: Rash, Hives and Difficult breathing.

Snakebites

All employees, especially those, who walk through the compound at night, should be aware that there are snakes in the area and should wear boots or other leg covering. Employees should be especially careful of woodpiles, rock piles, open pits and other debris that attract snakes. Any sighting of a snake should be immediately referred to the Administrative Officer or the RSO. Employees should not attempt to kill a snake. In the event of snakebite, the Medical Unit or Charlie Post should be contacted immediately

Rabies

Rabies is endemic to Lebanon. Avoid contact with stray dogs and cats. If bitten or scratched :

- Wash the area for 20 minutes with copious amounts of flowing water and soap to remove all saliva.
- Apply iodine (Betadine) or mercurochrome solution, alcohol or any disinfectant, as available.
- Notify the health Unit or your doctor immediately.

Do not kill the animal but place it under observation for at least two weeks if possible. The nurse or doctor will administer tetanus toxoid if indicated and evaluate the necessity of beginning the post-exposure rabies treatment.

If you have been bitten, due to the serious nature of the disease, we will recommend the post-exposure rabies treatment, which consists of

- For unvaccinated persons: A series of 5 injections in the arm, with a booster on 90 day after the bite.
- For those persons previously immunized with the pre-exposure rabies treatment within a year, 1 booster injection at the time of the bite.
- In those persons previously immunized but more than a year earlier: A series of 3 booster injections.

PETS

Employees may keep domesticated pets consistent with GSO guidelines but will adhere to the following rules:

All pets must be confined to the employees' residence and will not be permitted to roam on the Embassy compound freely.

ILLNESSES

Most infectious diseases do not occur in epidemic form in Lebanon. Of more concern to newcomers in particular is an occasional attack of diarrhea. It takes a period of time to adjust to a new environment with different food and low sanitation levels. It is not unusual to develop diarrhea during this period of adjustment. It is very important to adhere to simple hygienic measures. Remember to wash your hands before you eat anything and before preparing meals. If you have been out shopping, wash your hands as soon as you come home. Don't place your shopping bags on the kitchen table; place them on the floor. Diarrhea may result from dietary indiscretion, food spoilage, excess alcohol, bacterial or protozoan infections, and possibly worms and viruses. It is unwise to stop the diarrhea entirely and prematurely, thus interfering with a defense mechanism. A normal diet can be taken, but to prevent loss of electrolytes and dehydration one glass of Oral Re-hydration Salts should be taken for each watery stool.

Seek Medical Attention with Diarrhea when:

- Significant fever persists after the first 12-24 despite good re-hydration
- Diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting and you are unable to retain the oral re-hydration fluid.
- Diarrhea persists more than 2 days.

COMMON COLD

Newly arrived personnel often experience some respiratory irritation or infections shortly after arriving. This may be due to a new set of environmental allergens.

Upper respiratory symptoms are one of the most common group of reasons for people to visit the health unit. Unfortunately, medical science still does not have any particularly effective treatment for this. A "cold" will have to run its course like almost any other viral illness, (approximately 7 -10 days).

Cold medications (antihistamines, cough syrup, Tylenol. Etc.) are readily available over the counter in the U.S. and should be a part of your medicine kit.

These medicines do not have any effect on the infection itself – they only treat the symptoms. If the symptoms do not improve over a few days or if concerns arise, your health care provider should be visited.

ALLERGIES

The dust, especially during the hot summer months, may cause sinus problems. If you are prone to sinus congestion, be sure to keep enough of your previously prescribed sinus medicines on hand. The RMO can write a prescription during his/her visit.

AMOEBAS

The "Amoeba", *Entamoeba Histolytica*, an intestinal parasite found throughout the world, is endemic in Lebanon. The symptoms are usually diarrhea, constipation, abdominal pain and flatulence. It is possible to be a carrier of the cyst without any symptoms. Amebic infection is prevented by preventing contamination of food and water with human feces. Thorough cleaning of vegetables and fruits is essential.

ANTHRAX

Anthrax is a bacterial infection. In specific area in Lebanon it is naturally present in the soil. The infection can enter via the skin, the digestive system, or the respiratory tract. The bacteria can be made into a fine powder, which can be used as a biological weapon. Embassy employees are offered vaccination against anthrax.

GIARDIA

A parasite, *Giardia Lamblia*, which is found throughout the world, is endemic in Lebanon. It usually sits higher in the digestive system than the amoeba and might not show in the stool tests. Many are carriers without symptoms. However, G.L. can cause fatigue, diarrhea, flatulence, abdominal distention, dyspepsia and pain, and light colored stools. If these symptoms are present, treatment is usually given, even if the stool tests are negative.

WORMS

Worms are worldwide parasites. Ova passed by carriers may remain viable for months under the proper conditions. The ova contaminate food or fingers and are subsequently ingested by a new host.

The medication used to treat worms causes them to be expelled from the body.

HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). The virus is endemic in Lebanon. It is carried in the stool and transmission is usually the fecal-oral route. Vaccination is the best way to protect against this disease. People who get Hepatitis A vaccine have protection for years against infection with HAV. Hepatitis A vaccine is available for persons age 2 years and older. M/MED encourages the use of vaccine for those not proven to be already immune.

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is caused by the Hepatitis B virus (HBV). Transmission occurs via percutaneous or permucosal routes, and infective blood or body fluids can be introduced at birth, through sexual contact, or by contaminated needles, blood, or blood products. HBV is not transmitted via the fecal-oral route. Worldwide HBV infection is a major cause of acute and chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis, and primary hepato-cellular carcinoma.

M/MED considers the Middle Eastern countries to have high endemicity of Hepatitis B and is encouraging all American employees and dependents that are residents of this area to use the Hepatitis B vaccine, which is available at the Health Unit.

HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C is a disease of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV), which is found in the blood of persons who have the disease. The infection is spread by contact with the blood of an infected person. HCV can be spread by sex, but this does not occur very often. It is not spread by casual contact. Hepatitis C is serious for some persons, but not for others. Most persons who get hepatitis C carry the virus for the rest of their lives. Most persons have some liver damage but may not feel sick from the disease. There is no vaccine against this disease.

HIV/AIDS

- Condoms at the Health unit are available confidentially and free of charge.

The US Foreign Service is by no means immune to the ravages of HIV. In spite of the high level of education and sophistication of our employees, both American and foreign service nationals, we see new infections and deaths every year. As a result, the Department and its far-flung missions have devoted significant time and resources to the epidemic to lessen its devastating role on the well being of our people.

HIV/AIDS in the Workplace: In 2001, the Department issued a workplace policy for all missions, regardless of the prevalence of the disease in specific sites. The policy addresses several aspects of the problem. Among them are:

- No Locally Engaged Staff employee or candidate for employment is to be tested for HIV as a part of the requirements for work – American applicants for Foreign Service positions are still tested to insure that all are worldwide available.
- Locally Engaged Employees are encouraged to know their own HIV status through voluntary counseling and testing but there is no obligation to share that information with the Embassy. Strict confidentiality will be observed when information is shared. All attempts will be made to lessen the stigma that is part of HIV/AIDS.
- The missions are encouraged to insure that its employees are educated as to the nature of the disease and its means of prevention. The missions are to insure availability of treatment for opportunistic infections, prevention mother to child transmission and post-exposure prophylaxis and consideration is to be given for making available anti-retroviral agents for the treatment of advanced HIV disease.

Prevention: HIV is easy to prevent. Abstinence, having a single sexual partner of known HIV negativity and/or using a condom are straightforward means of insuring that the virus is not transferred. Blood transfusions should be kept to a minimum, within the bounds of safety, and when the local blood supply is considered unsafe, a “walking blood bank” of known HIV negative donors should be used.

Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP): The chance of contracting HIV from any given episode of occupational accident (e.g., a health care worker being stuck by a needle), trauma (e.g., a traffic accident where blood from one person mingles

with blood of another), sexual attack or consensual sex with a person of unknown status is low. Nonetheless, it is known from needle stick studies that the already low incidence can be lowered further by the rapid administration of certain anti-HIV drugs. The key is the drugs must be taken quickly, hopefully within a few hours. Should you, or a member of your family be possibly exposed to HIV, call the Health Unit immediately and discuss the problem with the doctor or nurse. At night or on the week end. Do not wait until the Medical Unit is open; seek advice immediately. The provider might well give you the medicines right away as he or she ascertains the true risk of transmission – the drugs might soon be stopped, or they might be continued for a full month. When in doubt, call!

Anti-retroviral agents (ARVs) – AZT was introduced in the late 1980s. Since then, a wide variety of drugs to fight HIV infection have been developed and the concept of combining 3 or 4 drugs in a “cocktail” has, for many, turned a fatal disease into a chronic one. In most developed countries, national programs have made ARVs available to all in need. In others, there are no such national programs and insurance companies are the font of such medicines. In several nations, especially in the developing world, insurance companies do not exist or those that do specifically exclude coverage for ARVs. In those, some US missions have established programs to make sure that their FSN employees are able to receive the drugs and be monitored for effectiveness.

Hotlines – There are many 24 hour/365 day sources of information on HIV/AIDS, both in the US and elsewhere. Perhaps the two best known ones are:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – 800-342-AIDS
University of California, San Francisco, for PEP questions – 888-HIV-4911

Your health unit staff is always ready, willing, and able to help. If they don't have the answers you need, they will get them for you. And, they guarantee that whatever you tell them will be held in the strictest confidentiality.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Regional psychiatrists are assigned to selected posts where they are available for consultation to official community members, post management within the region. The emphasis is on preventive mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, resolving marital conflicts in the overseas settings, coping with stress etc. The Regional Psychiatrists are actively involved in the crisis intervention activities when disasters, natural and otherwise that occur over seas.

The Regional Psychiatrist for this region is located in Cairo/Egypt. He makes regular visits to Lebanon and if needed he can be reached by phone in the US embassy Cairo.

STRESS

With all the security procedures at post stress is to be expected after a period of time in Lebanon.

While most people adapt and adjust to the various conditions of overseas living (geographic, relocations, responses to new cultures and the challenges of parenting), a few find that their coping methods may be overwhelmed to the point of requiring some therapeutic intervention.

Temporary indications that one may be experiencing undue stress are:

- 1) Feeling of anxiety, worry, guilt or nervousness.
- 2) Increased anger and frustration.
- 3) Moodiness
- 4) Depression
- 5) Increased and decreased appetite
- 6) Racing thoughts
- 7) Nightmares
- 8) Problems concentrating
- 9) Trouble learning new information
- 10) Forgetfulness
- 11) Increased frustration and irritability
- 12) Overreaction to small things

When stress does occur, it is important to recognize and deal with it by either developing a change in physical activities (exercise, relaxation techniques or seeking avenues for sharing one's stress – perhaps with the nurse, RMO), or by seeking professional help from a mental health counselor.

Cultural Shock

Many people assigned overseas are surprised and dismayed to discover that the effects of cultural differences can result in feelings of disorientation that range

from subtle symptoms to more alarming levels of reaction. These responses may be evident in employees and their dependents regardless of the number of previous overseas tours and despite their obvious positive anticipation for working and living in a foreign country.

- 1) Vague feelings of being lost in a strange environment
- 2) Feelings of frustration and anxiety within six months after arrival
- 3) Feelings of overwhelming need to isolate oneself from the environment or setting of assignment
- 4) Experiencing feelings of hostility and aggressiveness towards the host country and its culture
- 5) Rejection of host country's cultural values, beliefs and assumptions while comparing them unfavorably to that of American way of life

Many of these vague feelings or responses are a normal reaction to a new and different way of life and working situation. These feelings may temporarily interfere with one's development of a more healthy perspective. Often people are encouraged to participate in cross cultural orientation programs specifically focused in adjustment for that particular assignment.

Depression

Individuals may manifest transient responses to the adjustments of living and working in a foreign environment or to real external losses by 'feeling blue' or 'down in the dumps'.

However, it is necessary to recognize those situations in which a more serious condition occurs called clinical depression.

People who have major clinical depressive disorders have a number of symptoms nearly everyday, all day, for at least 2 weeks or more. The symptoms associated with this condition always include at least one of the following:

- Loss of interest in things they used to enjoy.
- Feeling sad, blue or down in the dumps.

They will also have at least three of the following symptoms:

- Feeling slowed down or restless and unable to sit still.
- Feeling worthless or guilty.
- Increase or decrease in appetite or weight.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.
- Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering or making decisions.
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Loss of energy or feeling tired all of the time.

With depression, there are often other physical or psychological symptoms, including:

- Headaches.
- Other aches and pains.
- Digestive problems.
- Feeling pessimistic or hopeless.
- Being anxious or worried.
- Sexual problems

Too often the symptoms of depression are not recognized as such and this often delays referral to the treatments that are available. Depression is treatable and successful intervention can save lives. Contact a mental health specialist or mental health organization (psychiatrist, RMO/P, psychologist, psychiatric social worker, RMO, or Nurse) to do the initial assessment and determination of the appropriate treatment approach.

DRUGS OF HABIT AND RECREATION

Alcohol and nicotine are in abundant quantity in Lebanon and readily available. Wine, Scotch and other alcohol sections at the local supermarkets are vast, and there are no regulations about smoking in public places.

Here are a few things regarding these harmful substances:

- **Alcohol**

In a country in which Embassy community members often feel isolated by language and culture, many people turn to alcohol in an effort to relieve boredom and to promote social interaction. The stress inherent in Foreign Service life also causes many people to drink more than they would back home. Alcohol has destroyed more careers, more marriages, more families and more lives than all other drugs combined. It is important to keep in mind that alcohol is indeed a drug, and like all drugs, some use can be beneficial but abuse can be deadly. When does use become abuse? It's a tough call and rarely just depends on the amount you drink. Many doctors use a simple screening test called a CAGE questionnaire:

- C Have you ever felt you ought to CUT DOWN on your drinking?
- A Have people ANNOYED you by criticizing your drinking?
- G Have you ever felt bad or GUILTY about your drinking?
- E Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning (EYE OPENER) to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

If you answered positively to any of these questions, your drinking may be a problem and you may suffer from alcoholism. Remember, alcoholism and alcohol abuse are diseases which can be treated, but only if you seek help. Lebanon has no AA programs but the health Unit can provide information and assistance with alcohol-related problems. In addition M/MED in Washington has trained counselors you can be referred to confidentially.

- **Tobacco**

No need to rehash the proven dangers of cigarette smoking. It is remarkable that, despite the ban on cigarette advertising, the aggressive public health educational campaign, and the stigma many attach to it, smoking remains so prevalent in our society in general and in the Foreign Service community in particular

The stress of a new assignment in a difficult place may cause you to smoke more. Nicotine is the most addictive drug known to man. Quitting smoking is difficult but the Health Unit can help by providing counseling, encouragement, and advice on using nicotine gum or patches. Once you make up your mind to stop, good and effective help is available.

MEDICATIONS

The Health Unit keeps a limited stock of drugs, which are available on an emergency basis at no charge to persons who are participants in the State Department Medical Program, when no other arrangements can be made.

Patients with medical problems that require long-term medication are themselves responsible for obtaining their medication.

Most of the drugs can be bought locally. If not, they can be obtained from a number of pharmacies in Washington, DC, which are experienced in dealing with Foreign Service Personnel. For prescription drugs, mail the prescription, provided by the RMO with a note requesting that the item be air pouched to you at your Embassy address with a bill enclosed. You can pay upon receipt with a personal check.

Medco health is the new name for merck medco. – they work for afspa, blue cross/blue shield, geha, mailhandlers, and other health insurance companies. Afspa has special arrangements with medco health services to provide up to one-year's medication to individuals with a properly completed prescription. The physician must write the prescription for a full one-year's supply with no refills. The member must pay the appropriate current. If the prescription is written for 90 days with three refills, MMRX must dispense it as written, they will dispense 1 90-day supply and the member must obtain refills in the normal manner.

Please check the following before submitting the order:

- The doctor must be licensed in the United States
- The license number must be indicated on all prescriptions
- The doctor's DEA number must appear on all prescriptions for controlled drugs
- The drug, strength, quantity, and directions should be clearly indicated on the prescription
- The prescription must be signed by the doctor. MEDCOHEALTH cannot fill prescriptions with stamped signatures or signatures by a registered nurse
- Include either the doctor's phone number or FAX number and his/her address
- Include an overseas FAX number and APO/FPO number if applicable.

POINT OF CONTACT: MEDCO HEALTH PRESCRIPTION FOLLOW UP

Formerly Merck Medco but the same mail order service

We strongly recommend that you contact Medco Health to verify that your prescription is being processed.

There is currently no other way to be sure your prescription has been received.

You have two choices:

1. Call member Services at 001-800-282-2881 and follow the instructions.
2. This will allow you to access Medco Health for AFSA, BCBS, Tricare, GEHA, APWU or any other insurance company that uses Medco Health for mail order delivery.
3. Go to Medco Health's Internet site www.medcohealth.com and register on the site and you will be able to track your order electronically. This is often faster and more convenient than trying to call the customer service number. (The previous address of www.merck-medco.com still works as well and probably will for a long time).

In addition, while you are at the website, go to the Drug Information section and print out a copy of the patient information on your medication.

Pharmacies in Washington DC area:

Columbia Plaza RX Super Store

516 23rd St. NW

Washington, DC 20037

Phone 202-331-5800

FAX 202-452-7820

(Mailing Fee: \$3.20 for mailing priority mail into pouch system. – E-mail: www.rx.worldwide.com. They will FEDEX and DHL. They also will forward OTCs).

CVS Drug Store

2125 E Street NW

Washington, DC 20037

Phone 202-38-6337

FAX 202-625-6621

Will only do refills via FAX. You must call for new RXs-Mailing fee: \$6,00 pouch; \$7,00 APO. – They will FEDEX and DHL, they also will forward OTCs.)

Morton's Pharmacy
724 E. Capital Street NE

Washington, DC 20007

Phone 202-543-1616

FAX 202-547-1636

(Mailing Fee: None –they will FEC-EX or DHL, they will also forward OTCs.)

Morgan's Pharmacy
3001 P Street NW Washington, DC 20007 Phone 202-337-4100 FAX 202 337-4102

(Mailing Fee: \$3,00 plus postage.-They will FED-EX or DHL, and they also will forward OTCs.)

Patients must provide a MasterCard or Visa number with expiration date for payment of all prescriptions. If a prescription is FED-Exed or DHLed out, the patient is charged the fee on his/her charge card.

A few other factors to keep in mind with FED-EX and DHL are:

- It frequently takes 5-7 days, even if it is an overnight shipment request.
- The host country customs may slow down or stop the prescription delivery and require documentation from the health unit or other formalities.

For Department of Defense prescriptions at no cost:

Pharmacy Service USAHC, Pentagon ATTN: HSHL-WP-P Washington DC
20310-5801 Phone: Autovan 225-6061; (703) 695-6061, 697-2166 Operating
hours: 07:45 - 16:15

FOR A NEW PRESCRIPTION:

Mail in a copy of the patient's ID card and the prescription. The following information is needed on the back of each prescription:

- Patient's name and rank
- Patient's date of birth
- Sponsor's SSAN
- Home address
- Signature
- Phone number

FOR REFILLS:

Do not send empty bottles.

Just photocopy a copy of the patient's ID card and state the prescription number(s) on the top left hand corner of the label.

POISON CONTROL CENTERS IN THE US

All centers are available 24 hours a day.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA:

Carolinas Poison Center: Phone 704-355-3054

Poisoning Emergency 704-355-4000 800-848-6946

WASHINGTON D.C.:

Georgetown University Medical Center Poison Control Center:
Phone 202-625-3333

FLORIDA:

Florida Poison Information Center and
Toxicology Resource Center: Tampa General
Hospital, Tampa, Florida
Phone 813-253-4444

SAN FRANCISCO:

University of California Medical Center Poison Control Center:
Phone 415-476-2845

SEATTLE:

Seattle Area Regional Poison Control Center:
Phone 206-526-2121

WHEN YOU CALL, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS NEEDED: THE POISON INGREDIENT (GENERIC AND BRAND NAME), THE AGE AND WEIGHT OF THE VICTIM, THE AMOUNT TAKEN (GUESS) AND WHEN. ALSO, ARE THERE ANY SYMPTOMS AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU TO REACH A HOSPITAL

PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS

The Office of medical Services (MED) recognizes and values a positive relationship between its health care providers and beneficiaries. The traditional patient/provider relationship at times takes on a new dimension when care is rendered in a worldwide setting, where medical support systems may and be as readily available as in the United States. The Office of medical Services strives to be sensitive to each person's unique health care needs and functions with the principle that each patient has the right to the considerations listed below.

Each person whop has medical or administrative dealing with the Office of medical services has the right:

- To expect to be treated with respect, consideration and dignity.
- To be assured of confidential treatment of medical information and records. To be afforded the opportunity to approve or refuse the release of such information, except as otherwise permitted by law or third party payment contract, HIPPA (Health Insurance portability and Accountability Act) regulations, the privacy Act, and when release is required by legal mandate.
- To know the name and function of any person providing the health care services.
- To know names and professional relationship of other physicians who may provide the care in the absence of his/her attending physician.
- To be provided, to the degree know, information concerning their diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. When it is not medically advisable to so, the information will be made available to an appropriate person acting on the patient's behalf.
- To participate in decisions involving their health care.
- To request a second opinion.
- To expect a response to any reasonable requests made for service.
- To refuse treatment and leave the premises against the advice of his/her physician to the extent permitted by law and to be informed of the medical consequences of his/her action.
- To expect communication in a language which they understand.
- To expect treatment without regard to race, r, creed, religion, sec, national origin or source of payment, except for fiscal capability thereof.
- To know services available, such as provisions for after hours or emergency care, educational material available, and policies concerning payment of fees.
- To receive an explanation of his/her bill, regardless of the source of payment.
- To expect reasonable continuity of care and to know in advance the time and location of appointments.
- To have available any area of where he/she is cared designated as a non-smoking area.
- To have all patients' rights extended to the person who may have legal responsibility to make decisions regarding medical care on behalf of the patient.

- To be provided information on and MED policy on formulation of Advance Directives (living will).
- To have his/her pain assessed and treated promptly and in concurrence with usual and customary medical practice.
- To voice complaints through a local Health Unit and a formal Quality Improvement program;, particularly those involving quality of care issues, with the expectation of a review and a response to the complaint.

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED BY MED (DOS MEDICAL PROGRAM) AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION

- MED is permitted to use, without an additional patient release, patient information for purposes of treatment provision of any diagnosis and prescriptions/medications in a DOS health unit/clinic), payment, health care operations (MED FAMs), medical suitability determinations (Clearance examinations), and the assignments process (Clearance decisions).
- Other uses and disclosures will be made only with the individual's authorization. Note: the patient may revoke this authorization.
- Individuals may exercise the following rights by presentation to MED Medical Records appropriate written requests for:

The right to restrict certain (specified) uses and disclosures of protected health information. Note: MED is not required to agree to a requested restriction.

The right to receive confidential communication of protected health information.

The right to inspect and copy protected health information.

The right to amend protected health information.

The right to receive an accounting of disclosures of protected health information that is sent outside of MED as for external consultations. Individuals are asked to sign a formal "Release of Information" form in this process.

The right to obtain a paper copy of this notice upon request.

1. According to HIPPA (Health Information Portability and Privacy Act), and the Privacy Act, MED is required to maintain the privacy of protected health information and to provide individuals with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices.
2. MED is required abide the by the terms of the privacy notice currently in effect, but reserves the right to change the terms of this notice and to make new notices provisions effective for all maintained protected health information.
3. MED will provide individuals with the revised notice published in writing and posted in the DOS/MED health information.
4. Individuals may complain to MED (Quality Improvement) and to the Secretary of health and Human Services if they believe their privacy rights have been violated. The individual may file a written complaint to the Director through MED/QI. MED expressly declares that the individual will not be retaliated against for filing a complaint.

5. The Chief of the Office of Quality Improvement will provide further information when called at 202-663-1741.
6. This notice is effective 11/2002.

If your concerns need further clarification or assistance, you may contact the Quality Improvement program of the Office of medical Services. Please address your signed letter to :

The Office of Medical Services, Quality Improvement program, Room 209,
and telephone 202-663-1741, Columbia Plaza, Washington D.C. 20522